DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 197 289 CS 005 818

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TITLE Adjunct Classes: Organizing Resources for High Risk Students.
PUB DATE Sep 80
NOTE 17p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Plains Regional Conference of the International Reading Association (8th, Bismarck, ND, September 25-27, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Curriculum; *Content Area Reading; *Developmental Studies Programs; *Educationally Disadvantaged; Higher Education; *High Risk Students; Reading Instruction; Remedial Mathematics; *Remedial Programs; *Study Skills; Team Teaching; Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS *Adjunct Courses; University of Wisconsin Eau Claire

ABSTRACT

The University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire has attempted to solve the problem of underprepared freshmen by offering adjunct classes to freshman level content courses. Currently ten adjunct classes in seven departments are taught and are used to integrate the teaching of learning and study skills into the teaching of the regular course content. Two extra class sessions per week are required of students in the adjunct courses. The courses are usually team-taught by two instructors--the departmental instructor who normally teaches the course and a learning specialist in reading, writing, or mathematics, depending on the requirements of the course. Academic support services are also offered at the academic skills center in the college, and there is a special advising component for disadvantaged students, minority students, and older returning students. (MKM)

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ADJUNCT CLASSES: ORGANIZING RESOURCES FOR HIGH RISK STUDENTS

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Today's college students are no longer the elite minority of twenty years ago. Altered admissions policies allow the enrollment not only of the academically successful students, but also of the high risk student. Today a large proportion of entering college students have conspicuous reading and study skills deficiencies: although they hold high school diplomas, they have not yet mastered the verbal, quantitative, and cognitive skills needed to survive in college.

These students cannot be "written off as intellectually inferior and relegated to the academic trash heap." (Algier, 1972) Although handicapped educationally, many of them possess the potential and the motivation (as indicated by their very presence) to succeed in college. However, their grave skill deficiencies and their resulting frustration in their courses force many to leave without reaching their potential. These problem students are not going to go away. The financial survival of colleges is becoming more and more linked to their ability to attract and retain them. If these students with basic skill deficiencies are going to continue to be allowed and even encouraged to enroll, universities have a moral obligation to them:

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they must either

1) lower academic standards to accommodate a lower level of performance (which few colleges would be willing to accept) or

2) attempt to do more than merely equalize access to education. They must provide programs to help students develop their skills to the necessary level.

EFFORTS OF REMEDIATION

For decades (beginning with Harvard in the late 1800's) colleges have been seeking ways to provide this help to students with the ability, but not the educational background or self-confidence to do college work. Numerous non-traditional programs have been attempted with varying degrees of success. The most common effort at remediation is the intensive care unit. Freshmen students are fed through a program consisting of a series of remedial courses in reading, composition, and/or math while simultaneously enrolling in regular university content courses. These programs are generally unsatisfactory for the following reasons:

1) Remedial courses are typically non-credit, and, as a result, students tend to give them a lower priority.

2) Students often don't transfer skills learned in these remedial classes to their content classes.

3) Unfortunately, students often fail out of college before the remedial courses can be effective.

ADJUNCT COURSES

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire has attempted to solve this problem by offering "adjunct courses." These are freshman level content courses with two extra class sessions attached per week. These "adjunct classes" are used to integrate the teaching of learning and study skills into the teaching of the regular course content. Thus retention of students is increased in courses where they have traditionally failed and students have the opportunity to earn academic credit (a proven motivator) and improve their skills, while taking courses employing the same university standards common to any other section of the course.

The concept of adjunct courses is not unique. The idea originated in the early 1920's. A "How to Study" course was offered at the University of Buffalo in which the materials used were assignments from certain freshman courses. This concept has since been adapted in various ways. Several colleges offer specialized content sections of developmental reading courses, for example, "College Reading - Biology Emphasis" (Currie, 1978). Norwalk Community College in Connecticut offers a course combining the fundamentals of reading and writing taught in conjunction with an introductory psychology course (Sherman, 1976). The University of California-Riverside offers an adjunct course for biology which focuses on the building of skills foundations for biology majors so they can later read science material independently (Tomlinson, 1976). San Antonio College offers courses dealing with vocabulary and comprehension development in a variety of content areas. Few universities, however, have as extensive an adjunct program as that of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

Adjunct Courses (continued)

Students who are advised into adjunct courses at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire include:

1. Those students who are repeating the class after failing or dropping it in a previous semester.

2. Those students readmitted to the University after suspension for low grade point average.

3. Those students admitted to the University on probation due to insufficient units, low H.S. grades, or substitution of G.E.D. for H.S. diploma.

4. Those students returning to college after an extended absence from schooling.

5. Those students with learning disabilities or skill deficiencies identified by advisors or tests administered in the Academic Skills Center or during Freshman Orientation (a two day period during which students are administered placement tests in reading, writing, and math).

Most students in the adjunct courses fit into the last category. Following are typical characteristics of these students:

1. Usually they have had poor high school preparation and thus often exhibit some combination of the following:
   a) inadequate reading skills
   b) inadequate writing skills
   c) little or no knowledge of study skills

Adjunct Courses (continued)

d) inadequate course work in math

e) a lack of regular attendance in H.S. classes

f) an avoidance of the sciences

g) an inadequately developed attention/concentration span

h) poor instructional motivation

2. They often have lower academic self-concepts which in turn generate lower goals. They are often easily discouraged by the demands of college coursework.

3. They often need slower paced course work with additional instruction in math, reading/study skills, and composition in order to complete the assigned work.

4. They have a need for more intensive advising and counseling; they both seek and need more reinforcement than other students.

5. They do not initially have graduation and career goals, and they need to develop and explore realistic goals.

6. They are usually unprepared for large classes and the lecture method of instruction and will not seek out instructors if falling behind.

7. They traditionally need assistance in developing the ability to budget time.

8. They often need help to develop adequate reading and study

Adjunct Courses (continued)

skills for success, but avoid use of the services (such as Learning Center) which would aid in these areas.

TRAINING FOR STAFF

Both content courses and staff are carefully chosen for adjunct courses. Key entry level courses are sought out which cause difficulty for developmental students and which are taught by concerned faculty. The courses are usually team-taught by two instructors -- the departmental instructor who normally teaches the course, together with a learning specialist in reading, writing, or mathematics, depending on the requirements of the course. The selection of the two instructors and their working relationship is vital to the success of the course. The two must be sensitive to educationally disadvantaged and minority students and possess the desire to put forth the extra effort necessary to aid students' growth both academically and personally. The content instructor is a regular member of the department offering the course. He/she has usually become interested in the adjunct program during his attendance at a five day Seminar in Developmental Education offered every spring at U.W.-Eau Claire. He receives no extra pay for teaching an adjunct course. The adjunct instructor is a regular member of the Educational Opportunity Program and teaches one-two adjunct courses per semester in addition to his work in the Academic Skills Center. The adjunct program has been so successful, however, that in some instances departments are hiring their own adjunct instructors because ASC staff are unavailable.

Once chosen to teach an adjunct course, department and adjunct

Training for Staff (continued)

instructors meet together with the adjunct support staff for a three hour inservice program. The first hour is used to provide an overview of the adjunct program and to introduce instructors to the support staff (advisors and Academic Skills Center staff). During the second hour, experienced instructors for adjunct courses share their experiences and suggestions, and new instructors have an opportunity to ask questions. Finally, each instructional team pairs off and begins planning its adjunct. Their working relationship is encouraged from the beginning; the relationship between the two instructors and between their two components are important aspects of the adjunct course. It is essential that the two be integrated, rather than two separate courses.

Using a handbook as a guide (appendix), the two first analyze each of the four major components of the content course, the four T's -- i.e., the teacher and his personality and style; the text, its difficulty, interest, and role within the course; the tests, the number and type; and the talk, or format of the classes. The content instructor has already planned the course in terms of these four factors; during the inservice, he and the adjunct instructor simply analyze them to determine which learning skills are demanded by the course. Both instructors are bringing experience to this decision: the content instructor brings experience in teaching the course, and knowledge of the kinds of problems students have with it; the learning specialist brings knowledge and experience with disadvantaged students and the learning process. Together they decide which aspects of the course are likely to cause problems and which skills require instruction.

Training for Staff (continued)

Their decision, of course, is only tentative until they can determine the specific skill levels of individual students in the class. Four kinds of information is utilized to determine skill needs of students:

1. Scores of tests in reading, writing and mathematics given during Freshman Orientation are sent to the instructors upon request.

2. Sometimes a study skills inventory is administered to the class. This provides an individual and a class profile of skills.

3. Group informal reading inventories or cloze tests are often given to determine the kinds of problems students will have in reading the text for the course.

4. Content instructors are encouraged to test early in the semester to determine students' skill levels.

After deciding which skills to emphasize, the content and adjunct instructors discuss plans for integrating the teaching of these skills with the content of the course. Instructors inexperienced in teaching adjunct courses are provided with a resource manual which includes a discussion of specific skills problems of disadvantaged students, resource information about each skill, and suggestions and handouts for each.

Usually on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays the content instructor teaches the class, teaching the same course content as he teaches in regular sections of the course, while the adjunct instructor attends, observing class participation and listening and notetaking behavior, and

Training for Staff (continued)

usually taking lecture notes to be used later in teaching and reinforcing effective notetaking skills. On Tuesdays and Thursdays the adjunct instructor teaches, while the content instructor observes and serves as a content resource. Some content instructors observe only occasionally, but experience has shown that their presence is important. Both student attendance and class participation are greater when they attend. Also, the adjunct classes become in effect an inservice program for them: they tend to improve the quality of their own teaching as they observe the techniques of the adjunct instructor.

CONTENT OF ADJUNCT CLASSES

A 1971 research study of 302 college freshman having academic difficulties showed that four out of five were experiencing difficulties as a direct result of inferior study practices (Butcofsky, 1971). The purpose of the adjunct classes is to build study skills of students so that they can be successful in both the attached content course and their other courses as well. Little lecturing or direct teaching of study skills is practiced. The intent is to provide an integration of skills with content, not a separate study skills course. The emphasis in the adjunct classes is on providing activities which force students to use efficient study techniques until they become habitual. Three major areas of learning skills are stressed -- lecture notetaking, textbook reading, and studying for exams. Following are examples of techniques used to teach each area.

Most adjunct students are freshmen from high schools in which lectures and lecture notetaking are uncommon; thus these students are at a loss in

Content of Adjunct Classes (continued)

college classes, in which lecturing is the norm. The adjunct instructor usually teaches the Cornell system early in the semester and periodically evaluates students' notes using this system. Frequent activities are used to provide students with practice using effective notetaking. Sometimes a transparency of the adjunct instructor's notes or a videotape of a segment of the previous content class is used so students can check their instructor's lecture style. Sometimes students write key words or summaries for either their own notes or a transparency of the adjunct instructor's notes. Faculty are encouraged to help in teaching efficient notetaking by beginning each session with a review of the previous class and an overview of the one about to begin and also by ending each class with a summary.

Students enrolled in adjunct courses generally have poor reading skills and often experience frustration and failure when faced with the massive amounts of reading required in most college courses. The adjunct instructor teaches students how to read the text, using a variation of SQ3R designed for use with the text used in the course. Throughout the semester students preview chapters, map chapters, discuss graphs and other aids, and do variou activities forcing them to use the organizational structure of the chapters. The adjunct instructor also discusses internal and external concentration problems, and encourages students to set goals for themselves in these areas. Content instructors are encouraged to discuss purposes for reading each chapter and the amount of thoroughness expected.

The adjunct instructor teaches effective techniques for studying and taking the type of exam used in the course. Throughout the semester students are grouped to make up exam questions from the previous chapter

Content of Adjunct Classes (continued)

or lecture; these questions are later used in review sessions before the exam. Students are also taught how to write summary sheets; usually before the first exam the class makes part of a summary sheet together. After this first exam a post-exam survey is given and used as a discussion guide to discover more efficient ways of studying for the next exam. Students are encouraged to set goals for improving their studying. Throughout the semester they are encouraged to ask questions about the kinds of exam questions to expect and the amount of emphasis which exams will place on the text, lectures, outside reading, etc. The course itself is tightly structured with frequent tests, quizzes, and class discussions to ensure that learning is distributed and not crammed.

Other skills (vocabulary, essay exam writing, appropriate classroom behavior, time management, etc.) are emphasized whenever appropriate to the course. The atmosphere is an important aspect of the Tuesday/Thursday sessions. The adjuncts are designed to improve self-confidence and motivation as well as learning skills. A 1976 research study by Roueche and Mink found a significant relationship between the amount of time faculty spend getting involved with students and the amount of content mastered. In adjunct courses, instructors make a point of showing personal concern for students. The first session is a get acquainted session for both instructors and students. This helps freshmen to see their teachers as people and to become comfortable in active participation in the class. If a student is absent, one of the instructors will either call him or talk to him about his absence before the next class; the importance of attendance is stressed heavily. If a student receives a low grade on a

Content of Adjunct Classes (continued)

test or quiz, he is scheduled to talk with one or both of the instructors about where he went wrong and how he can improve his score on the next test. Evaluations are administered frequently to provide students with constant feedback.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Adjunct courses at the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire serve to focus or pull together all resources for high risk students. The Academic Skills Center is one of the major support components. This service provides individualized assessment and instruction in the basic skill areas -- reading, writing, mathematics -- as well as tutoring for a limited number of science courses. In addition, it offers ten five-week minicourses in specific study skill areas (Effective Listening, Techniques for Studying Math, Lecture Notetaking, Studying for Objective Exams, etc.). These are workshop-type courses in which students bring their own textbooks, etc., and learn effective study strategies using their own materials. Most adjunct instructors meet early in the semester with each student individual] in the ASC to discuss his strengths and weaknesses and ASC services that he should utilize. Both the workshops and individualized tutoring are recommended to individual students throughout the semester whenever appropriate.

The Precollegiate Program for Disadvantaged Students is another integral aspect of the adjunct program. This is an intensive five week summer learning experience in an integrated program of science, math, reading, and composition. The program serves approximately 30 minority and

Support Services (continued)

disadvantaged high school graduates each summer. Those who successfully complete the program receive three credits and are endorsed for fall admission. Most of these students are advised into adjunct courses in the Fall.

The Special Advising component includes special advisors for disadvantaged students, for minority students, and for older returning students. These special advisors serve to complement department advisors and to ensure that low-skilled students are channeled to appropriate support services. Students are referred to them on the basis of low high school records, recommendations from department advisors, counselors, or instructors, and from screening tests in reading, writing, and mathematics given to all entering freshmen. Special advisors are concerned with the whole student: they assist in evaluating each student's strengths and weaknesses, advise him appropriately according to these strengths and weaknesses, and provide information about (and encouragement to seek out) campus resources he needs, and generally serve as a central contact for the student. Each student signs a contract with his special advisor in which he agrees to utilize specified support services and to have his academic progress monitored. Advisors communicate with adjunct instructors frequently via informal written reports or group meetings concerning the progress of each student. They meet with each student at least once a month; this constant communication with the student and his instructor helps keep the advisors aware of each student's over-all academic picture so that they can head off potential problems. In addition to these meetings a newsletter, The Advisor, containing announcements of important dates and information and suggestions for improved studying, is distributed

Support Services (continued)

times per semester.

As a rule, advising for high risk students is strict and directive. These students often have an unrealistic idea about what they can accomplish Special advisors usually recommend students take only 12 credits per semester so that withdrawals and incompletes and their attendant frustration are minimized. This also leaves time to utilize ASC services to improve basic skill deficiencies. Special advisors are also careful to recommend courses so that students are not placed in situations beyond their capabilities.

EVALUATION

At the end of each semester, each team of instructors for an adjunct course evaluates the course in the following ways:

I. EVALUATE IN TERMS OF OBJECTIVES FOR THE COURSE:
   - A. What skills did you originally plan to develop?
   - B. What did you do to develop these skills?
   - C. How was skill acquirement measured?
   - D. What content-based objectives did you have for your course?
   - E. How did you measure student achievement of these objectives?

II. EVALUATE IN TERMS OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND BEHAVIOR:
   - A. What was the grade distribution within the course? Is this pattern significantly different from your other sections? How?
   - B. Did you notice any changes in student behavior? What were they? Document them.

Evaluation (continued)

C. Did students attend content and adjunct classes regularly? What was the attendance pattern?

D. Did students complete assignments and exams as scheduled?

III. EVALUATE IN TERMS OF STUDENT PERCEPTIONS:

A. Have students evaluate both the content and skills parts of the course.

In the past these evaluations have been quite positive. UWEC began offering adjunct courses in 1976 with two courses, Psychology 100 and Sociology 101. This semester ten adjunct courses in seven departments are being taught. This growth reflects the successfulness of the adjunct program at our university. Students seem to emerge from adjunct courses with greater self-confidence and satisfaction about the academic environment improved learning skills, and generally, a better chance of success in college.

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